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THE DECLINE OF MILITARISM IN JAPAN

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INTERESTING and useful as are the many studies of present-day Japan which are now appearing in this and other periodicals, they are for the most part, however accurate and informing, studies in cross-section. This is necessarily the case since most of this writing is based upon knowledge of contemporary circumstances acquired by Europeans and Americans whose cultural antecedents are those of the Western world.

I do not wish to minimize the importance of these "studies in cross section" pursued by patriotic Americans of unbiased minds. I do not wish to express an opinion as to whether or not or in how far they may be right in discerning a menace to civilization and especially to the United States in the present condition of the Far East. For, though studying the question from a different angle, I wish emphatically to disassociate myself from those (more vocal than numerous) Americans in foreign residence who strive to curry favor among alien peoples by slandering or misleading their fellow citizens. A study in cross section may be of the greatest value when it warns of imminent danger or stimulates discussion as to the existence and extent of such danger. But it is incomplete. It leads to a knowledge of facts. It tells us little or nothing of tendencies. Studies in perspective are needed to complete the picture. And it is exactly here that our knowledge of Japan is most inadequate. Our familiarity with European history enables many of us to draw a fairly accurate picture of the nineteenth century Germans as a reasonably peaceful people gradually militarised by Napoleonic aggression and Prussian Junker domination. We possess no correspondingly widespread knowledge of Japan and hence

many of us have come to speak of her as a sort of Asiatic Prussia. The title which I have chosen for this paper indicates, as I hope to show, exactly where this suggested analogy breaks down. For militarism,—as distinguished from mere modernization of military methods,—declined in Japan while it was growing in Germany.

Japan, when first she began the development of her armed forces along modern lines, engaged French instructors for her army. After the Franco-Prussian war, Germans took the place of Frenchmen. The vast majority of foreign instructors for the navy were, from the first, Englishmen.

None of these influences is responsible for the existence of militarism in Japan. Japan had been from mediaeval times militaristic to an extent the Junker may have dreamed of but never realised. Japan's modern civilization has developed along militaristic lines because it was inconceivable that it could develop along any other lines. Many of the sentiments (including, it surprises some people to hear, the intense national consciousness called patriotism¹), which now inform the thoughts and acts of the Japanese are of modern origin. But the militaristic sentiment needed no new impetus. It was there. It was for this reason that it needed but the introduction of modern military methods to render Japan, as a fighting power, formidable out of all proportion to wealth or population. Prussia could not in 1870 (or for that matter in 1914) have taught militarism to Japan.

Even in 1914 Germany, though she had built up the most formidable army in the world and the most efficient navy possessed by a continental European Power, was widely admitted to possess also the best railways, communications and other public services upon the continent of Europe. Even her educational system, though (I have always thought) vastly over-rated, was, in a certain and almost sinister sense, efficient.

For these reasons it must be conceded that the militaristic asymmetry of late nineteenth century Germany was considerably less than that of Japan. There is, I think, no other country where, in time of peace, the efficiency attained

¹ The corresponding virtue in feudal Japan was loyalty,—a virtue far more easily exploited for the purposes of militarism than genuine patriotism. Peoples who have come under the influence of Confucianism set a high value upon loyalty as (e.g.) in the case of filial piety.

by the armed forces stands in such startling contrast to the achievements of other branches of the public service.¹

But Japanese militarism has declined since 1870. It is still on the decline. That this movement has been exceedingly gradual is due in part to the cultural tradition of the people² and in part to circumstances both internal and external of which what follows is intended to be a rough sketch.

It is a matter of more or less general knowledge that, for some centuries previous to the opening of Japan to foreign intercourse in the nineteenth century, the Government of the country, so far as a central Government existed, was a curious sort of duarchy; that while the sacred city of Kyoto enshrined the cloistered Mikado, scion of a line which a system of concubinage and adoption had kept unbroken from time immemorial, Yedo (now Tokyo) was the seat of that military government (shogunate) which was held one after another by families whose power successively declined as its opportunities were abused. At the time of the opening of the country the shogunate was held by the great house of Tokugawa.

Trouble had long been brewing for the Tokugawa. Whether their fall would otherwise have resulted in the "restoration" of the emperor to temporal power or in the rise of another great house to the shogunate may be left as an open question, but foreign intrusion made the restoration a certainty, not only because it was a political necessity to unify the Government in the face of foreign pressure but also because the "presumption" of the shogun in concluding treaties of intercourse with foreign countries without reference to the imperial court united against him both the anti-foreign element and the protagonists of the imperial prerogative.

There was a southern bloc led by four great clans (Satsuma, Choshu, Hizen, Tosa), who, by reason of their remoteness from Yedo and the fact that the Daimyo of Satsuma and Choshu, were the richest and most powerful of the feudal nobility, occupied a position of semi-independence. These houses, united by common jealousy for pre-

¹ This contrast, while marked, is easily exaggerated by tourists, since their judgment is warped by difference of antecedents—e.g., accommodations in railway trains correspond to Japanese (not American) standards of comforts.

² Some exponents of "Social Evolution" (e.g. Prof. Benj. Kidd in his *Science of Power*) appear to have based conclusions on the supposed rapidity with which an imagined entire change has taken place in the mental outlook of the Japanese people.

rogatives which were always threatened by any strengthening of the shogun's hands, acquired also a common grievance against the foreigner whose most wanton acts of aggression, epitomised in the bombardment by allied fleets at Kagoshima and Shimonoseki, fell with especial severity upon their territories.

It was necessary for Japan to present a united front to the foreigner. It seemed possible, employing adroit diplomacy backed by force, for the combined southern clans to overthrow the shogun. It was plainly impossible for any one of them to seize the shogunate. For this reason the restoration of the emperor and the expulsion of the foreigner became their slogan.

The last of the shogun, outwitted in diplomacy, threatened by overwhelming force, and distrusted by those very foreigners whose treaty rights he was striving to protect, was not equipped by nature and training to deal with so grave an emergency. A wiser man in his position would have bargained and yielded, for he was in a position to drive a very good bargain for himself and his vassals, the northern Daimyo. But a vacillating temperament and the importunities of intemperate retainers led him into belated and hopeless armed resistance. Thus, to the already enormous prestige of the southern chieftains (especially the Daimyo of Satsuma and Choshu), was added the fact that their samurai, quelling resistance in every corner of the empire and incidentally destroying the power of the northern lords, had shed their blood to found the new Government about to be established under the "restored" emperor.

The southern nobles had no intention of seeing the sacrifices of their clans go unrewarded. Upon victory, as was inevitable, came a division of the spoils. By the time the restoration had been effected it had become clear that Japan could not safely refuse to enter upon diplomatic relations with European Powers. It is well, even yet, to remember that she did so under compulsion. The anti-foreign element, though it had helped restore the Mikado, was obliged to yield to the force of circumstances, but, obviously, it could be counted upon to endorse a policy which looked to Japan's growth in military strength. It was also natural for feudal chieftains, now convinced of the need for national solidarity, to think of the nation as a

glorified clan. Just as, within the clan, men were ranked as (1) fighting men (samurai), (2) farmers, (3) skilled workmen, (4) tradesmen, and (5) outcasts, in the order named, so, in the new nation, the achievement of fighting power was regarded as easily the most important question. When it came to a division of the spoils the two great plums were the Army and the Navy. Choshu got the first and Satsuma the second. These services are still looked upon as the happy hunting ground of the two clans.

The very fact, however, that national solidarity had become a *sine qua non* for the new Government made it necessary for the victorious clansmen to sow the seeds of that national consciousness which must, in the long run, deprive the clans of all power. It is in the use that has been made of the department of education that Japan has most resembled modern Germany. She seems indeed, in some respects, to have out-Heroded Herod in this department, and to impart knowledge apart from "patriotism" has been made almost a crime. Thus missionary schools which were in the early days of new Japan a great boon to the youth of the country were kept under close and, at times, hampering surveillance by officials not always friendly to Christianity.

With the sure decline of the power of the clans it has been inevitable that, in a poor country with many pressing domestic problems, militarism should also decline. The decline has been slow. The armed forces are still, in point of efficiency, far ahead of any other public service.

It has been pointed out that foreign menace as well as domestic political interest has played its part in retarding the decline of Japanese militarism. I do not deny that this menace has been at times very real. I think it safe to say that it has always been exaggerated. At any rate it has never been underestimated. For this reason it cannot be regarded as an entirely independent factor though, in so far as it was real, it has been a contributory element in stimulating Japanese naval and military expansion. It will be a sad day for the militaristic politician when Japanese apprehensions of foreign aggression approach the vanishing point. These form the militarist's great stock in trade, and a bogie, euphemistically described as "our hypothetical enemy," frequently mentioned in budgets, is invoked to determine the increases necessary for the navy while the

necessity of holding the two clans together inspires corresponding support for army expansion.

The foreign menace did approach reality about the time of the restoration. Not only was Japan practically forced against her will to open her doors to foreign intercourse, but one foreign nation, Russia, in taking Shaghalien, laid her hands upon land to which the Japanese also laid claim. On both sides the claim was to rule alien rather than kindred peoples (together with their mines and fisheries), but Russia's bearing throughout the dispute made it clear that force was the only argument to which she thought it worth while to appeal. There was perhaps some danger at that time that Russia might attempt the invasion of Japan proper (though she would have received the surprise of her life had she done so), and this danger was greatly exaggerated in the eyes of those who were not yet sufficiently *en rapport* with world affairs to gauge the restraining effect which European rivalries exercise upon the aggrandising efforts of any single Power. Traditional racial and religious prejudices often led Japanese of the early Meiji era to assume that the Europeans were leagued against them, and some color was lent to this assumption by the occasional coöperation of foreign envoys for the protection of their subjects and by military demonstrations for this object, for the purposes of relevant reprisal, and for the collection of indemnities. The thirty-third year of Meiji (1900) found Japan coöperating with these same European Powers in a somewhat similar undertaking when Graf von Waldersee led the allied forces to the relief of the Peking legations. During the past forty years no anti-Japanese combination has involved more than three Powers at once and this combination (France, Germany, Russia) did not threaten her territorial integrity but only limited the extent of her territorial aggrandisement at the expense of China after the Chino-Japanese war in 1895.

European and American neutrality in the Russo-Japanese war, Japanese participation in the late world war on the side of certain European Powers against certain others and the recognition accorded her as one of the "Big Five" at the Peace Conference will have the effect of making it increasingly difficult to use "the foreign menace," thus vaguely described, in the interests of military expansion. This is bound to have an effect upon those issues (such as

the Shantung matter) which are now engaging universal attention. For Japanese territorial expansion has been military rather than either colonial or commercial. It has been urged that as Japan is a densely populated country, it is inconsistent for Americans and Australians to limit Japanese immigration to their own shores and at the same time object to her expansion in other directions. One remembers that somewhat similar arguments were employed by the Junkers. The answer in both cases is that the expansion in question does not offer any relief to density of population. Japan did not annex Korea because Korea offered a wide field to Japanese immigration but for a strategic reason, viz. "Korea in the hands of Russia would be like a dagger pointing at Japan's heart." Japan's position entitled her to sympathy (which was generously accorded her in America) and her expulsion of Russia from The Land of the Morning Calm was perfectly intelligible.

One good reason for thinking that Japan will eventually return Shantung to China lies in the fact that here again no reason other than a strategic one exists for its retention. In this case the strategic considerations cannot be seriously regarded as possessing a defensive character. Thus, with the decline of the militaristic sentiment, the desire for the retention of Tsingtao must necessarily disappear. For Japan cannot colonize Shantung. The population there is said to exceed in density that of Japan in a proportion of six to four, and as Chinese labor is already excluded from Japan to protect the Japanese workman, it is unimaginable that the latter can compete with the Chinaman on his own soil.

Japan owes much to the strong hands that guided her destinies during the last third of the nineteenth century. Her people as a whole have not been unmindful of this fact. They have a warm admiration and affection for their great military leaders. But these men were themselves capable of great self-denial. Trained in an allegiance to the clan which itself called for a high degree of self-abnegation, transferring this devotion to the imperial throne that their nation might live, it is no exaggeration to say that they are as much revered for their high moral examples as for their military prowess. This moral tradition will be, in future years, a treasure more precious to the nation than any chronicle of conquest. If their successors, honored at

first for their sakes, substitute swashbuckling and swagger for knightly carriage, they will not be looked upon as displaying a consistent reverence for those ancestors whose memories (for only a few of them now walk the earth) their countrymen delight to honor.

No doubt it is right to think of these men as militarists. They were such at a time when it was inevitable for them to think that in militarism lay the salvation of their country. But these were men of sensitive and even in some cases of tender natures. They had an eye for moral as well as for physical beauty. What they did not themselves conceive of the humane in warfare they learned and adapted with a rapidity which often shamed their teachers. They were militarists; but the ideals which they inculcated were such as militate against the vainglorious display of force. Long may their remembrance survive in honor!

There is at least one way in which foreign Powers have retarded (or seemed to retard) the decline of militarism in Japan. It is possible to think of the foreign *menace* as often the creature of politicians anxious to secure large military and naval appropriations. It is not so easy to explain away, in a manner satisfactory to the Japanese mind, the fact that foreign *recognition* and respect have appeared to follow upon the display of military prowess. Is it a mere matter of chronology that treaty revision whereby ex-territoriality and other galling limitations of sovereignty were removed was greatly accelerated after Japan's victory over China in 1894-5; that the Anglo-Japanese alliance which, more than any other thing, has tended to make the Japanese feel that they were at last recognized as an equal member in the company of civilized Powers, was the direct product of Japan's demonstrations of fighting power; and that Japan's share in the world war has brought her recognition as one of the "Big Five"?

It is of course answerable that the last two of these three items belong in any case to the category of armed strength. Further, I am convinced that it is not true,—though cynics often say it,—that the Japanese victory in China convinced America that Japanese courts had now become competent to try defendant foreigners.¹ I do think that the startling display of progress in one department shown in that victory

* Under ex-territoriality jurisdiction was exercised by the court of the defendant's nationality.

did stimulate the serious study of the other institutions of modern Japan and thus accelerated a recognition which, upon investigation, was found to be merited. Even so, it is impossible to say that Japanese military prowess was useless in winning recognition for Japan. But the extent to which this is true is due to that very ignorance of Japan which, as I pointed out in the opening paragraphs of this paper, prevents a true appreciation, based upon studies in perspective, of situations affected by Japanese tendencies in life and thought.

These considerations are certainly pregnant with suggestion for those "who would labor for peace with them that make peace" as well as with those who act upon the motto "In time of peace prepare for war."

I do not dispute the soundness of the teaching which informs this last adage. Writing from abroad, I would not say anything which might be distorted into a suggestion that we need not be prepared for any conceivable eventuality. The easy conquest of a land so rich as ours must suggest itself to the predatory minds of whatever country as a worthwhile undertaking. Defensive armament means making the game very plainly not worth the candle. For such a purpose Japan is already more than adequately armed. She will entertain no grievance if, in a spirit of friendliness, we, who offer the greater temptation, make the sin correspondingly difficult. The way of the transgressor upon her own sovereignty will be exceedingly hard. We too must face the world prepared to defend our shores. All this is preparation for war. It is justifiable precaution but it is not constructive peacemaking.

Peace depends far more upon goodwill than upon the dread of consequences. This paper is written not to prevent precaution but to promote good will. Upon the first point, if I may be permitted the paradox, I have repeatedly and persistently said nothing. As to the second I have tried to give grounds for thinking that the Japanese are not at heart a militaristic people and that militarism is on the decline in their country.

It is not likely that intelligent Japanese will long pretend to find a grievance in the fact that the United States Senate has candidly debated a proposal which was openly submitted to it for consideration. Nor will they question our right to protect our legitimate interests in the Far East

on the basis of a non-existent and preposterously impossible "Asiatic Monroe Doctrine."

But, unless the cultivation of mutual sympathy gives rise to more intimate knowledge, it will be possible for many years to come for interested parties to convince them that such legislation as has been from time to time enacted by Pacific coast legislatures is evidence of American unfriendliness. Japan cannot complain of the mere fact that her subjects are debarred from holding land in a few American States where there is real danger of large areas passing into the hands of aliens for, throughout the whole of Japan proper, Americans are subjected to similar disabilities, although the entire number of American residents in the Empire is less than one-tenth the Japanese population of California alone, and none of them are manual laborers or farmers. An American in Japan may not own outright the house he lives in,—much less large tracts of arable land.

The hypothetical-enemy-ist finds his grievance not in the facts but in circumstances which, he alleges, surround the facts. (i) He not infrequently accuses the United States of bad faith with a frankness which, if exercised on the floor of the United States Congress with respect to his own country, he would vociferously resent or (ii) he maintains that, whether in technical violation of treaty or not, the act in question set up a distinction as between races which is humiliating to the Japanese people.

The first of these contentions he can render plausible in the ears of a majority of his countrymen by trading upon their ignorance of the American system of government. Themselves the subjects of a highly centralized government where every local authority is, in the last analysis, a delegate of the crown, it is exceedingly difficult for them to conceive of a group of States each retaining every particle of sovereignty not definitely ceded to the Federal Government. Nor is it possible for Americans to undeceive them since they will, naturally, incline to believe their own leaders. But as leadership becomes more widely distributed and falls more and more into the hands of those not interested in military aggrandisement, saner views are sure to prevail. It will come to be understood that a treaty-making power does not violate its obligations save by its own acts or omissions, and that no act or omission of the United States Government has been in violation of the most

favoured nation clauses in the treaties which that Government has ratified. I for one would be greatly rejoiced if the Pacific Coast States could see their way clear (with due regard to their obligations to their own people) to make the lot of the Japanese traveller a happy one. But I am also convinced that the United States has scrupulously observed its treaty obligations and that it would be a mistaken policy for the Federal Government to be moved in the least degree by erroneous accusations of bad faith.

The second point—that Californian and other laws are informed by a desire for racial discrimination, is again more plausible than accurate. No doubt race prejudice exists in California as in other places (not excluding Japan) but as this has not been sufficiently strong in times past to prevent certain Californians from encouraging coolie immigration, it need not be regarded as a dominant factor when (as at present) a majority of Californians desire to prevent it. Indeed, if Japanese sources of information were not measurably controlled by those who are interested in preventing their countrymen from becoming sincerely friendly to any foreign people, reasonably frequent reference to Japan's own policy with respect to Chinese labor immigration would go far to show the groundlessness of this alleged grievance against (part of) the United States.

It is a sign of better times that this analogy has of late been frequently drawn in the more enlightened portions of the Japanese press and that, on the other side, it is somewhat feebly met by the naïve suggestion that Japan immediately rescind her Chinese immigration laws so that she may be in a position to demand similar action in her own interests on the other side of the Pacific.

As straws showing the direction of the wind, I will mention three things.

(i) Twenty-five years ago the favorite play of children in the streets was mimic war. I now live on a street which is on the direct route from barracks to target range. Bodies of troops pass the house at all hours of the day. Yet one seldom if ever sees the children playing soldier. Toy weapons are, if anything, less in evidence than on an American street in a town of corresponding size. Military caps and "sailor suits" are much less worn by children here. I have heard lads openly congratulated upon escap-

ing the Army draft. Twenty-five years ago such a felicitation would have been taken as an insult. One frequently hears complaints of conscript evasion.

(ii) Twenty-five years ago the young man trying his "English" on the foreigner used often to begin "Why you come to my country?" Today the question is almost invariably "Where do you go?" (that is, "What is your destination?") This is not intrusive though it is often resented as such by the newcomer to Japan. To converse with a fellow traveller for any length of time without inquiring his destination would, to the average Japanese, betray a discourteous lack of interest in him and his affairs.

(iii) *The Japan Advertiser* of April 15th, 1919, printed the following paragraph with figures which, covering as they do the period of the world war, seem significant:

While the number of officers required for the navy is yearly increasing, applicants for service have been somewhat on the decline, as will be seen from the following table showing the number of applicants for admission to the Naval Cadet School and the number admitted.

	Applicants	Admitted
1912	3,014	100
1913	2,641	100
1914	2,363	100
1915	2,262	130
1916	2,456	130
1917	2,390	179
1918	2,317	193
1919	2,606	300

The necessary number is made up by taking the high men in competitive examination in the order of their standing. It will be seen that in 1919 the navy was obliged to accept eleven and one-tenth per cent. of all applicants as against three and one-third per cent. in 1912. This is a startling change for a period of seven years, during four of which the navy was engaged in war, and is in itself evidence that I have not been without justification in choosing the title for this article.

JOHN COLE MCKIM.